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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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"The following comments on elementary and secondary school education in the Latvian SSR date through mid-January 1953.

State Requirements

"Compulsory schooling was introduced in the Latvian SSR in 1952. In the country all children are required to take the seven-year elementary school course. The elementary school is always referred to as the seven-year school (semitalke). In the larger towns -- Riga, Liepaja, Daugavpils -- all children must study for 13 years. After their course at the semitalke they may go to work, if their parents cannot afford to keep them in a day school, but they must continue their secondary education at night school.

"In the country only elementary education is enforced. The children start when they are six or seven. If a child of that age does not turn up at school, his parents get a letter ordering him to report. Because people fear the Communist authorities, they obey."

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4. "In some rural areas, eg the Nica commune near Liepaja, there are ten-year schools (desiatiletka), but not all the children complete the course at these schools. There is no penalty if they do not, so long as they have completed their equivalent of the semiletka.
 5. "In the towns it is different. If a boy (or girl) seeks work after finishing elementary school, factory managements inquire where he is continuing his education. If he is not still going to school he does not get the job. The majority of semiletka graduates go to night schools and work during the day. Young people who refuse to study are sent to kolkhozes or placed in Factory-Workshop Schools -- so-called FRA-Schools (Fabriku-Rupkash Arodskola in Latvian, or Shkola FZO- Fabrichno-Zavodskogo Obucheniia in Russian). There they learn a trade under conditions resembling army barracks or a mild labor camp. [See Para. 40]
 6. "When a pupil graduates from elementary school to secondary school, he must fill in a detailed questionnaire about his family -- father, mother, grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, -- and his friends. If the family is 'bad', ie bourgeois and reactionary, the pupil is not barred from further schooling. But the children of good, reliable, proletarian families have priority before him in the choice of secondary school. If there are enough of these to fill the vacancies at a given school, the child of unreliable parents is sent away, no matter how good his semiletka certificate. He must apply for admission at some school that is less popular.
 7. "To finish secondary school a pupil must pass examinations in all his subjects. The examining committee of teachers also includes a representative of the local CP committee. The most important subject is Marxism-Leninism. If a pupil gets a low mark in that -- say a 3 [only 'satisfactory', see Para 10] -- his whole leaving certificate will be bad and he will have no chance to go to college. Membership in the Komsomol is actually, though not officially, obligatory for admission to a university or a good career. The CP representative on the examining committee sees that Komsomol members are passed more easily than the others.
 8. "Upon gaining admission to a university, a student must pass a new set of examinations within the faculty of his choice. Certain subjects are common to the examinations of all the faculties: Marxism, literature [type not specified], Russian and Latvian languages, mathematics. With the exception of the examination in Russian language, the questions are set in Latvian.
- Fees
9. "Elementary school education is free. For the six years of secondary school education -- day or night -- the annual tuition fee is 150-180 rubles, depending on the type of school. Children of teachers and of disabled war veterans receive their secondary education free of charge.
 10. "Pupils at secondary schools --both day and night -- can earn scholarships through merit. The Soviet system of marks is:

- 5 - Excellent
- 4 - Good
- 3 - Satisfactory
- 2 - Unsatisfactory
- 1 - Bad

In order to qualify for a scholarship all a pupil's marks must be 'Good' or 'Excellent'. In the first year such a scholarship is 140 rubles monthly; in the second year it is 160 rubles monthly; in the subsequent years it is 180 rubles monthly. Nobody can live on such a small sum, but it helps the family budget.

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11. "If a pupil has held a scholarship in school he must work, upon graduation, where the State decides to send him. Graduates in Liepaja have usually been given work in Latvia, but as of mid-January 1953 there were rumors that the boys studying metallurgy at the Technical College there would be sent to the Urals.

Curriculum

12. "All subjects in the curriculum are permeated with communist propaganda -- even mathematics, for the sums one does in elementary school are about kolkhozniks delivering so-and-so much for their compulsory agricultural quotas and having so-and-so much left with which to buy a Moskvich car etc. In chemistry students are taught, for example, that Mendeleev was a precursor of Communism; he thought always of the people and was hated by the Western 'big suckers'. All existing inventions and technical improvements are represented as Soviet achievements.
13. "The two subjects most distorted in the curriculum of Latvian schools are Latvian history and Latvian literature:

- (a) Latvian history, as such, does not exist. Soviet history is taught in its stead. It figures in the curriculum from the fourth year of elementary school through the last year of secondary school. The Latvians and Latvia are mentioned in reference to four events only:

- In the Napoleonic War of 1812, when part of Napoleon's troops marched through Latvia;
- The Revolution of 1905, when peasants revolted in Latvia;
- The October Revolution, when certain Latvian regiments joined the insurgents;
- The admission of Latvia in 1940 into the 'happy band' of Soviet republics.

The Soviets are represented as the greatest friends of the Latvian people through the ages. The pervading theme of this new history is that 'the East is the great source and symbol of freedom'. Not a word is said of Latvia's period of independence. Not a word is said even of the 'criminal regime' of Ulmans. That era is deliberately ignored.

- (b) Latvian literature is essentially Soviet literature. The textbooks discuss all the Soviet writers studied in the course of Soviet literature, mentioning a few Latvian writers here and there. These textbooks of 'Latvian literature' virtually the textbooks of Soviet literature translated into Latvian. As both subjects are compulsory the net result is that students study Soviet literature twice, once in Latvian and once in Russian.

According to the textbooks, the greatest Latvian author today is [fnu] Sudrabkalns. The good ones are [fnu] Rainis, Anna Sakse, Fricis Rokpelnis, Villis Lacis and Andrejs Upits. [fnu] Jaunsudrabinsh does not exist. [fnu] Blaumanis might be admitted, but 'he has portrayed the misery of the people without indicating the way out from such misery', i.e. Communism. Therefore, the textbook mentions him only briefly and includes no biography. Eduards Virza is abused as the lackey of Ulmans. [fnu] Aspasia and Anna Brigadere

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are ^{not} considered unworthy because they indulged in 'lyric sweetness' and did exhort the people to struggle. Such writers as Veronica Strelerte, Andrejs Eglitis and Martinah Ziverts, who went into exile to escape the Soviet occupation, are never mentioned.

The education authorities cram so much literature into the school curriculum because they consider it the best vehicle of propaganda-- a kind of sugar-coated pill. The young people continue to read the old books whenever they can get them. The only new books which enjoy a certain popularity are those by Vilis Lacis, especially Birds Without Wings. To New Shores is also read.

Textbooks, Supplies and Facilities

14. "Students have constant difficulty getting their required textbooks because, with the exception of the mathematics manuals, they are always being revised -- particularly the textbooks on Soviet history and literature. One year an author will be excluded, only to reappear several years later. But there are many excluded each year, and they never all return together, so a discarded text is never good again. The revised texts appear late -- sometimes months after the beginning of the scholastic year -- and in insufficient quantities. Schoolbooks in Latvia have become items for speculation: a student with friends at a bookshop (or the bookshop employees themselves) will corner the market, buying up the available copies and selling them 'black' for fancy prices. Students have to buy their own textbooks, which are not cheap. They average between five and 25 rubles each. A textbook of Soviet literature costs 10 rubles; a manual on mechanics costs 25 rubles. Those are official prices -- the blackmarket prices are much higher. Technical literature is always expensive. Since the mathematics manuals do not change, they are usually available to students in the school libraries.
15. "Students buy their copybooks at their schools, paying 25 kopeks for each. None are sold in the shops because the paper shortage is so great. The maximum number of copybooks a secondary student can buy each year is 25; younger students get less. Pencils, nibs and ink can be bought in the shops. Maps can also be bought in the shops. There are large maps at the schools.
16. "The school buildings, in general, are poorly cared for and fairly dirty. Most of them are not heated more than twice a week during the winter; the children often attend class in overcoats.
17. "The schools provide lunch for their pupils, at a charge of 12 rubles per week. This lunch consists exclusively of a bowl of thin vegetable soup without meat; no milk or bread. However, many children buy it because it is comparatively cheap and their one chance for a warm midday meal when both parents work.

Communism

18. "A certain amount of pressure is exerted on schoolchildren to join Communist youth organizations. It is usually easy to make the young children join the Pioneer League. The teachers have to promote it: the children are told that they will see films free of charge if they join and also have opportunities for sports. In the towns about half of the pupils in the lower grades are Pioneers; in the country the number is less. Parental consent is not necessary before a child joins the Pioneers. Small

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children usually believe what they are told in the Pioneer camps and rallies, unless home influence counteracts the propaganda. However, some twelve-year olds know perfectly well that the propaganda is false but stay in the League because of the advantages it offers.

19. "It is different with the Komsomol. Very few youngsters join. In the lower classes of secondary schools there are often no Komsomol members. Later, those who plan to go on to universities do join because it is the only way to get ahead, but the proportion of Komsomol members among secondary school graduates is probably not larger than 15-20%.
20. "Very few older children believe the regime propaganda, not even the Komsomol members who have to read Marxist lectures to the others. If there are any believers, they are cured on their first real job when they see what economic life is actually like.
21. "All the schools must participate in the political demonstrations on Communist holidays. Absentees are reported by their teachers to the headmaster, who must report in turn to the CP. The usual penalty for absenteeism on such occasions is lowered marks for order, but one's chances of passing the final examinations are also jeopardized.

Teachers

22. "There is no shortage of teachers - at least in the Liepaja area. The majority -- about 70% -- are young and new. The Communist regime does not favor the old teachers, probably for ideological reasons. Yet the young teachers are Latvians too, and no more pro-regime than their predecessors.
23. "There are no Soviet teachers in Latvian schools except those who teach the Russian language.
24. "Latvian teachers are trained at pedagogical institutes, which are considered institutions of higher education (VUZ) and of equal standing with the universities. The course at the Pedagogical Institute in Liepaja lasts four years. This institute has five faculties: Latvian language, Russian language, history, mathematics and natural science. Students of all faculties must also take a course in Marxism. When they graduate they are fully-qualified teachers and earn a salary of about 600 rubles a month.
25. "The Pedagogical Institute in Daugavpils has a preponderance of Soviets.

Schools in Liepaja

6. "I am not sure of the total number of schools in Liepaja itself. [redacted] there are four Latvian and five Soviet schools [type not specified]. All the schools work in two shifts. If a school is mixed, the Soviets take the morning shift and the Latvians the afternoon. Only one new school building has been built in Liepaja since World War II. It is a large five-story building in the northern suburb. In addition, there are four night schools in Liepaja: - The Technical Evening College for both Soviets and Latvians, and three regular secondary schools.

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Liepaja School for Applied Art

27. "The School for Applied Art (Liepajas Dailamatniecibas Widusskola) on Alejas Street in Liepaja existed before World War II. In 1952 the School for Applied Art in Kuldiga was liquidated and the students transferred to Liepaja. The total enrollment at the Liepaja school is now 350-400. There is also a school for applied art in Riga. It has two branches, one for Latvians and one for Soviets. The school in Liepaja is for Latvians only, and the teaching is done in Latvian.
28. "The Liepajas Dailamatniecibas Widusskola has five departments: amber work, pottery, woodcarving, weaving and metal work. The course in metal work includes work in chemistry and metallurgy. Students usually enter upon graduation from elementary school. The course lasts five years. The yearly fee is 170 rubles. Scholarships are available. A graduate may go directly into industry or continue his studies at the Art Academy in Riga.
29. "Several subjects are required in the curriculum of all departments: the History of the USSR, the Russian language, the Latvian language, the English language (prior to 1951 French was the required language), algebra, geometry, trigonometry, ornamental composition, drawing and painting.
30. "The pupils range in age from 14 to 25. Only since the merger with the Kuldiga school have boarding house facilities been provided. Most of the students live at home. The boarding house for boys is on Peldu Street; about 10 live there. The boarding house for girls is on Zivju Street; about 20 girls live there.
31. "Most of the teachers taught at the school before World War II. The headmaster, Jurijs Anzolis, aged 48, taught there when Latvia was independent. None of the teachers are Communists. A woman, (fnu) Zilite, who taught Soviet history, was dismissed in 1952 when she was observed entering a Catholic church. She has disappeared from Liepaja.
32. "Both teachers and students are strictly forbidden to have anything to do with the Church. The students are told that people who believe in God have no place in a Soviet school. In 1952 some pupils were refused leaving certificates because they had got confirmed. They were branded by name in the local paper as relics of the dark era of capitalism.

Liepaja Technical Evening College

33. "The Technical Evening College in Liepaja is on Krisjana Valdemara Street, where there used to be a technical college prior to World War II. The school has two departments: metallurgy and 'electrotechnics'. The course offered by the latter department is shorter. Russian, Latvian, and Soviet history and literature are requirements in the curriculum. Upon graduation the best pupils have the chance of being sent to Moscow to an institute where the annual tuition is 400 rubles.
34. "The school has about 300 pupils, about half Latvians and half Soviets. The head is a Soviet woman, (fnu) Shcherbakova, who formerly taught somewhere in Kazakhstan. She has a rather yellow complexion and is middle-aged and dull. Her predecessor was (fnu) Vinogradova, another Soviet woman who was dismissed for her 'joyous temperament'. She liked good food and drink and took bribes in order to get money she needed. It

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was generally known that one could get a leaving certificate from her for 200 rubles. Finally a Soviet boy informed on her, and the MVD sent her back to the USSR. The other teachers are Latvians, most of whom taught at the college before World War II.

35. "The school building is kept reasonably clean and well heated. Lessons start at 6pm and last until 10:30 pm, but the students have to get up about 6:30 a.m. to get to their factory jobs. Occasionally the school is closed entirely and the students packed off to help in the kolkhozes. At the beginning of January 1953 they were taken off in lorries to work for ten days picking sugar beets from under the snow at the kolkhozes in Aistere.
36. "There is no special political instruction beyond that injected into every subject. About once a week the form-masters hold a 'political half-hour' in which they analyze some newspaper article which praises the Soviet regime. The pupils tend to believe what they are told about the strikes and starvation in the West -- until the lecturer emphasizes the prosperity in Latvia. That they know is false, so they doubt the rest.
37. "The relation in the college between the Latvian and Soviet students is bad, and it is the fault of the Soviets. They are boastful and overbearing and insist arrogantly that everything in the USSR is better. The Latvians naturally resent this, and fights are apt to start. The Latvians also resent the way the Soviet pupils are favored and held as examples, though they are generally worse behaved. The two groups keep strictly apart. They rarely fight over girls, because Latvian girls do not, as a rule, go out with Soviets. The Soviets drink a lot, and dances are apt to turn into brawls.

VEF Technical College, Riga

38. "A Technical College is attached to the VEF plant in Riga. That is a large plant which produces electric equipment and radios. During their course the students hold good jobs at the same time in the VEF plant. Upon graduation they have the chance to get even better jobs. Applicants whose permanent residence is not in Riga are turned down.
- FRA-Schools
39. "There is a Factory-Workshop School, a so-called FRA-school (Fabriku-Rupniecibu Arodskola), on Alejas Street in Liepaja. The pupils are boys aged between 13 and 17. They are both Latvians and Soviets, the Soviets being in the majority. Most of these boys are war orphans or persons whose parents have been arrested or deported. Some are juvenile delinquents who have refused to attend the regular schools or have been arrested for petty thievery etc. The original plan for these schools was that pupils would be drafted to them forcibly. Parents everywhere raised such opposition that the idea has been abandoned, at least for the present.
 40. "In contrast to the practice at other vocational schools, the pupils at the FRA-schools receive very little instruction on general academic subjects. They concentrate on practical training almost entirely. They are trained in obbling, turning and, in most cases, bricklaying. The school course is short: three to six months. The pupils are then sent into factories as ordinary workers. Although there is a law that minors should not work in factories longer than six hours daily, this is not observed and they work the full eight hours.
 41. "The FRA-schools are boarding schools. The pupils wear a blue uniform in the winter and a white uniform in the summer.

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42. "Discipline at these schools is weak. Most of the teachers are Soviet women, and they have trouble handling the boys. A Latvian teacher, became interested in the FRA-schools and asked for a job at the one in Liepaja. She had great influence over the boys because she reasoned with them instead of just beating them as do the Soviet women - a practice which just made the boys retaliate with more defiance. The FRA boys in Liepaja are so wild that they are actually feared in the town.
43. "Because of their background and attitude, the FRA boys work badly. They were the chief construction workers on the only new school building erected in Liepaja since World War II, the school in the northern suburb. When the walls were raised, a large fissure appeared in the foundation, which had been poorly built from the start. The fissure has been mended by an arrangement of iron bars and clamps.

Military Schools

44. "Two types of schools in Latvia today are particularly unpopular among the Latvians:
- (a) The various military schools -- All instruction in these schools is given in Russian. There is no rule, however, against the admission of Latvians.
 - (b) The Merchant Marine School in Riga -- This institution is bi-lingual with Russian and Latvian departments. Few Latvians attend voluntarily because, though the conditions in the school itself are the same as in other schools, the severe discipline on Soviet ships makes the merchant marine a hard existence."

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